

**“In the Loop”**  
**Senator Bruce Patterson’s Communications**  
**District 7**  
**3/18/05**

**Willow Run Airport Expansion in Gov’s Budget**

The governor’s Capital Outlay budget for Fiscal Year 2005-6, now in committee, contains over \$5.8 million for Willow Run Airport, mostly designated for **new construction**, not maintenance. This information was faxed to Sen. Patterson’s office by mistake, and thus exposed. Sen. Patterson is again opposing any efforts to use state tax money to extend or widen runways and taxiways at Willow Run, under any pretext. “The area is simply not suitable for this kind of expansion. It will force people out of their homes. It will create more noise.” A letter went out to some 550 local residents who had indicated interest previously, with a return card, to express public opposition to use of the governor’s Capital Outlay budget (SB 235) in this way. If you wish to join this effort but did not receive this mailing, you may still join in. Just call the Senator’s Lansing office. A letter to your newspaper editor will assist in making the case for your home and neighborhood. Keep those cards and letters coming in!

**State Low Income Energy Assistance Fund funded only by DTE Customers**

Are you a DTE customer? Is your electric bill sky high? Did you know that YOUR *\*electric\** bill has a charge to support the Energy Assistance Fund for *\*natural gas\** bills in all the rest of Michigan? No other electric customers in Michigan have such a charge levied on them. The Michigan Public Service Commission [MPSC] thinks this is fair. Do you? Many people contribute willingly to help low income people with their energy bills; but this charge is not voluntary. Sen. Patterson has introduced legislation to spread Fund support statewide, since residents of Plymouth and Brownstown, for instance, are now supporting needy families in Muskegon, Petoskey, Saginaw and Copper Harbor, without aid from Kalamazoo or Grand Rapids. The bill is SB 334. Your letter of support to Sen. Patterson, and your local paper could help unsnarl this current inequitable situation.

**Regulatory reforms to aid Michigan’s economy, promote environmental stewardship**

Senate Republicans announced a package of legislation that would reduce Michigan’s regulatory burden on businesses as part of their plan to strengthen Michigan’s economy. The package addresses a number of regulatory issues, including:

- Providing clear rules, definitions, and fair fees to businesses seeking air quality permits;
- Offering incentives for companies that attain Clean Corporate Citizen [“C<sup>3</sup>”] status;
- Enhancing brownfield redevelopment opportunities;
- Engaging the private sector in wastewater treatment; and
- Exposing burdensome administrative rules.

**Notification of stolen or misused personal information**

Legislation (Senate Bill 309) was introduced in the Michigan Senate this week requiring companies to notify Michigan residents when their personal, credit or medical information has been stolen or misused. Last month ChoicePoint, a national data aggregating company, announced that the personal information of 145,000 United States residents was stolen in October 2004. Currently, California is the only state with a law that requires companies to notify

affected individuals when their information is stolen or used for fraudulent purposes. Failure to notify an affected individual would be a violation of the Identity Theft Protection Act, which carries a maximum 30 days of imprisonment and \$1,000 fine per violation.

### **Internet crime (adapted from *PC News* and *Yahoo*)**

Complaints about online fraud nearly doubled from 2003 to 2004, according to a [December 2004 report](#) by the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center. Research firm Gartner estimates that nearly 10 million Americans were hit by online fraudsters last year--largely due to a wave of 'phishing' e-mails seeking to steal users' identities. (You know, -- those 'fishy' things you may get from time to time that ask for a reply, with a hidden 'hook' to snare you.)

'Phishing' attacks seem to be the new, hot scam. Scammers send you an e-mail that tries to lure you to a legitimate-looking Web site where you'll be asked to enter personal information. The thing is, it's all fake; and if you fall for it, someone is ready to take your Social Security Number and start opening credit card accounts. The FBI recently began warning people of scammers posing as tsunami-relief organizations. And late last month, the FBI warned that someone out there was even posing as the FBI itself--sending a fraudulent e-mail with the subject line "FBI Investigation" and trying to lure people into buying products from a separate, fictional scam artist whom the Feds were supposedly on to.

Confusing? Sure. But just ask yourself this: When was the last time the FBI sent a polite e-mail when they wanted someone's cooperation in an investigation? Thousands of con artists, grifters, fraudsters, and other denizens of the dark are trolling for victims online. Can you recognize online fraud when you see it? Auction fraud, Phishing scams, letters from "deposed Nigerians" (contrary to Nigeria's 419 law), postal Forwarding/Reshipping scams, or "Congratulations, You've won a ..." (but you never entered such a contest) are among the more common out there today. So beware!

If you, or someone you know, has been a victim, contact the state Attorney General's Office. (517) 373-1140 or [http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,1607,7-164-17334\\_17364---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,1607,7-164-17334_17364---,00.html) will connect you to AG Mike Cox's office for Consumer Protection matters.

### **Possible tax credits for donated land**

Legislation providing tax credits to individuals that donate land for preservation was introduced in the Legislature. Senate Bill 317 and House Bill 4524 would allow taxpayers to claim 50 percent of the taxable value of a qualified property donation on their taxes. The Single Business Tax credit may not exceed \$100,000 a year. To qualify for the donation, the land must be donated either to the state of Michigan, to a political subdivision of the state or to a charitable organization, such as a land conservancy. SB 317 was referred to the Senate Committee on Finance, while HB 4524 was referred to the Committee on Tax Policy.

### **Legislation would prevent diploma mills**

Senate Bill 136 would create the Authentic Credentials in Education Act and would prohibit a person from knowingly issuing or manufacturing a false academic credential. It is aimed at internet-based diploma mills that grant degrees for a fee without requiring any academic work.

An individual who did not have an academic credential would be prohibited from knowingly using or claiming to have that academic credential to obtain employment or a promotion or higher compensation in employment; to obtain admission to a qualified institution; or in connection with any loan, business, trade, profession or occupation.

### **Disabled Adults in Michigan, too**

Terri Schiavo's case in Florida has drawn international attention to the plight of severely disabled adults. Who rightly speaks for them? Who should make life or death decisions? The US House of Representatives has intervened, not just for Terri, but for others in her condition. Carl Levin and Barbara Boxer managed to get the US Senate adjourned for Easter on schedule without action on the bill. Rep. Tom DeLay called their blocking action "unprecedented cowardice." The battle is a hot one. What are your thoughts?

### **Contact Information**

Thank you for your interest in our current state issues. If you would like to receive future updates via e-mail, please contact my office at < [senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov) >. You can also visit me in my Lansing office at 505 Farnum Building, just across S. Capitol Avenue from the state Capitol; or you can send me mail at P. O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909. Telephone (517) 373-7350 or (866) 262-7307; fax (517) 373-9228. I want to hear from you.

### **Coming to Lansing...**

Karen Braun and her children, of Canton, came to visit the Senate recently as a home school outing. Here they are with me on the Senate floor. If you would like to bring yours for a fine educational experience, please contact my office.

